



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY J. MORRISSETTE, STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATOR

BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN CAUCUS

PUBLIC HEARING

MARCH 29, 2012

Good afternoon Representative Holder-Winfield, Representative Morris and members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. My name is Jeffrey Morrisette, I serve as the State Fire Administrator and Division Director for the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection's Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. I extend greetings on behalf of Commissioner Rueben Branford and Commission Chairman Peter Carozza. We appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to share the Commission's organizational mission and efforts to carry out our mission without discrimination.

The establishment of a Commission here in Connecticut was the direct result of a national effort in the late 1960's to address the ever growing fire problem in the United States. At that time, a Federal fire focus had been established through the creation of a National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to combat the \$11 billion in resources wasted by destructive fire each year. Additionally, more than 12,000 people were killed and tens of thousands injured annually by fire. It was and is still very clear that fire does not discriminate; it does not care how much money you make, how old you are, what race or ethnicity you are. The National Commission issued a report titled *America Burning* to begin an effort to significantly reduce the fire problem. This report provided helpful guidelines for local, State, and national efforts to reduce the life and property loss by fire.

To create a state fire focus, a Commission was first established here in Connecticut in 1973. This organization was known as the Commission on Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education until replaced by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control on July 1, 1975. The Commission continued as a stand-alone Executive Branch agency until consolidated into the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection on July 1, 2011.

The Commission consists of twelve members appointed by the Governor representing the major statewide fire service organizations. Of the twelve members, two each represent the Connecticut State Firefighter's Association, Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association, Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association (UPFFA) of the IAFF AFL-CIO, the Connecticut Fire Marshals Association, Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. In addition, there are two ex-officio voting members; the State Fire Marshal

Commission on Fire Prevention and Control

34 Perimeter Road

Windsor Locks, CT 06096-1069

Phone: (860) 627-6363/Fax: (860) 654-1889

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and the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education or their designees. Each of the fire service organizations, with the exception of the UPFFA, historically nominates one of their representatives from a career fire department and one from a volunteer or combination fire department. As previously noted our current and long standing Chairman is Peter S. Carozza, Jr., President of the UPFFA. The Commission, formerly a policy board, is now advisory to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Commissioner Reuben Bradford.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §§ 7-323(k) - 7-323(o) the Commission is charged with and has primary responsibility for Connecticut OSHA compliance training, public fire and life safety education and professional competency testing and certification for members of Connecticut's fire service.

At present, Connecticut's fire service has nearly 300 fire departments staffed by approximately 5,000 career and 22,000 volunteer firefighters. Access to Division programs is to all fire service personnel without discrimination. Numerous other programs are available to other first responders, state employees, teachers and members of the public.

The mission of the Commission is:

To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters, either natural or man-made, on the citizens of the State of Connecticut. This is accomplished through the development and delivery of state-of-the-art educational programs designed to meet nationally recognized standards, certification of individuals to such standards and maintenance of up-to-date resources for use by fire service personnel, public educators and other first responders.

The Commission is internationally accredited by two separate accreditation boards and operates the Connecticut Fire Academy in Windsor Locks. We are one of only a few states accredited for over forty levels of professional competency testing; a strong testament to the support Connecticut's fire service provides our programs. By virtue of our accreditation, fire service personnel certified by the Division are deemed "Nationally Certified". Value is added to our students again as Charter Oak State College has approved 13 Connecticut Fire Academy programs for collegiate transfer credit. In addition, we work collaboratively with the nine independent Regional Fire Schools to coordinate training and education. A mission delineation agreement eliminates duplication of effort.

The Commission is staffed by 14 full time staff members (12 General Fund) and approximately 150 Adjunct (per-diem) Fire Service Instructors. Our operating units are comprised of the Office of State Fire Administration, Training (Connecticut Fire Academy) and Certification Unit. A summary of each unit and accomplishments for FY11 and early FY12 follows:

OFFICE OF STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATION

The Office of State Fire Administration provides overall coordination, management and support of division activities and facilities. Administration of various grant programs, including the Supplemental and Entry Level Training Reimbursement grants to local fire departments continued through the year however funding was eliminated for FY12 and 13.

The Office provides consulting services to communities regarding fire department management, administration, juvenile firesetter intervention and volunteer recruitment and retention. In addition, oversight of the Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Response Plan continues as a priority with staff serving as Fire Service Liaison's in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) during activations. The State Fire Administrator served in leadership roles at the SEOC during both Tropical Storm Irene and the October Nor'easter.

Over the past two years land was procured for Regional Fire Schools in Beacon Falls and Willimantic; completion of upgrades to the New Haven Regional Fire School and groundbreaking for expansion of the Harford County Regional Fire School at the Connecticut Fire Academy were all highlights. Information dissemination to fire service constituents continued primarily through the CFPC email listserv with over 4,000 messages transmitted during the year.

Training (Connecticut Fire Academy)

The Training Unit delivers a diverse range of training and education programs ranging from the comprehensive 14-week resident Recruit Firefighter Training program to Fire Officer and technical specialty level courses with collegiate transfer credits. Courses are available for delivery throughout the state or at the Connecticut Fire Academy in Windsor Locks.

During FY11, 350 training programs were delivered reaching 7,899 students resulting in 178,898 contact hours. Special seminars and specialized technical training including Rescue Week and the Annual June Fire School provided training to over 800 students. A significant accomplishment was the handoff of curriculum to local fire departments of the Hazardous Materials Awareness/Operations/WMD course based upon the NFPA 472-2008 Standard. Several improvements were made to our youth program which has seen great support from both parents and fire departments statewide. Continued popular, was delivery of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) to assist municipalities identify future firefighters with the capability of career and lifelong success. A total of 1,738 candidates were registered with 1,367 testing. An overall passing rate of 74% was achieved. Collaboration continues with the Military Department and Department of Public Health in the operation of the New England Disaster Training Center at Camp Hartell in Windsor Locks providing unique training opportunities for all emergency responders.

Certification Unit

The Certification Unit administers professional competency testing and certification of fire service personnel. The Unit is internationally accredited by both the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service (NBFSPQ) Professional Qualifications adding value to fire service personnel achieving certification. A total of 6,318 psycho-motor evaluations and cognitive examinations were administered during FY11 with an overall passing rate of 83% for cognitive examinations. Promotional and entry-level examinations continue to be offered to fire departments and municipalities statewide. Following a thorough site-visit and evaluation, the Unit was reaccredited for an additional five years by

IFSAC. A newly implemented improvement now allows students to look-up examination results on-line via the Division's website.

Highlighting some criteria for the Division's accreditation includes:

- The agency shall ensure that the certification process is nondiscriminatory and available equitably to all persons served by the agency.
- Procedures shall be in place to ensure that the agency is responsive to the views and opinions of organizations representing groups affected by the certification program, such as volunteer firefighter associations, labor organizations, fire chiefs' associations, etc.
- Procedures shall be in place to evaluate and respond fairly to appeals of the certification system including individual test items and/or assessment outcomes.
- Procedures shall be in place to ensure that a fair retest policy is consistently applied for candidates who fail an exam.
- Written policy, procedure, etc. that identifies equitable access, including:
 - Accommodation of candidates with disabilities
 - Open access to user-friendly application and administrative processes
 - An equitable fee structure
- Policy, procedure, etc. that identifies how a candidate may appeal assessment outcomes or test results
- Policy, procedure, etc. that identifies how a candidate may appeal a policy, process, or methodology of the certification system
- Policy, procedure, etc. that identifies how the agency assesses and addresses the challenges and appeals listed above

Representative Larry Butler requested I provide the Caucus with some insight into our Recruit Firefighter Training Program. Provided as an attachment, is a course schedule for Recruit Class #49. Our Recruit Class is a comprehensive and intensive 14-week (640 contact hours) residential based training program. The program focuses on developing knowledge, skills and abilities needed for entry level firefighters. Training consists of theory backed with extensive skill development. Additional course components include training in Hazardous Materials mitigation, Weapons of Mass Destruction Preparedness, Confined Space Rescue, CPR/AED and Technical Rescue. Graduating recruits will be nationally certified to the level of Firefighter I and Firefighter II in addition to being awarded numerous certificates for specialized training.

Diversity-type instruction approaches in Recruit Firefighter Training

The general approach in the Recruit Firefighter Program finds its foundation in the development of firefighting team concepts, and all of the associated abilities to work well together serving diverse communities. Since it is often both difficult to ascertain observable differences in individuals, and difficult to avoid the inherent traps of fallibility in identifying broad categories of difference, ours is a more comprehensive approach. The essential focus is on developing an interest and understanding of unity, consideration, and acceptance as they form the basis of melding differences and varieties into firefighting team strengths. This begins in the administrative preparation of the class, where room assignments are deliberately made as "double room occupancy" only, and where there are no two firefighters from the same department assigned together. The "double room occupancy" concept mirrors the most probable firehouse scenarios, and the mixed rooms ensure that firefighters are forced to learn about others from other backgrounds, experiences, and types of fire departments (career, volunteer, large urban, small rural, etc.).

During the orientation on Day 1, information is disseminated regarding Rules, Regulations, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, Behavior, and other materials that delineate maximizing the benefits of individual strengths and differences. One evening in the first week, recruits attend what is termed a "Cultural Diversity" class, which is in actuality much broader in its delivery than one of only cultural diversity. In this class, diversity is covered in the context of the fire service and the communities firefighters serve, and is broad in its scope for cultural, generational, and gender diversity. The primary focus of this delivery is to build upon the improbability of knowing, completely understanding, or accommodating all of the differences or variety in a modern culture, and to place greater emphasis on an interest in self-less activities geared toward the betterment of firefighting teams. This class and delivery has a communications basis (verbal and non-verbal), and includes civility-type mutual respect training.

Throughout the remainder of the Recruit Training Program, students are coached, mentored, and evaluated on the strengths of both their individual performances, and within the context of acceptable fire company performances in four primary areas: Cognitive, Psychomotor, Affective, and the Work Capacity domains.

To conclude I would be remiss not to recognize a large benefit of the recent consolidation of the Commission into the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. The resources of this larger organization are certainly beneficial to our overall strength. Commissioner Bradford provides leadership and commitment to ensure a diverse work force, staff training and education. The agency's Equal Opportunity Manager provides enforcement services such as basic EEO, Sexual Harassment, ADA, Retaliation and contract compliance. This strong commitment from the top along with organizational resources and support will continue to strengthen our agency and division to ensuring our mission is carried out without discrimination.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our mission and services. I am available to respond to any questions you may have.